ON THE ART OF ENAMEL.

At the Society of Arts on the 12th instant, Mr. Digby Wyatt read a paper on "The art of Enamel, ancient and modern." It commenced with some remarks on the necessity of increasing the resources of the designers of metal-work, by effecting changes in the process of manufactures, and by that act producing a novelty, which might possess all the charm of freshness, without any of that extravagance so constantly resorted to in the attempt to produce variety.

The speaker affirmed, that the art of enamel presented this so much wished for desideratum, and that by imitating the practice of the mediæval artists in this material, we might considerably enrich our industrial resources and facilitate the execution of beautiful works of utilitarian art.

After a hasty description of the composition of pure enamel and the nature of the pigments usually employed to colour it, Mr. Wyatt proceeded to enumerate the six leading varieties which had been adopted at various periods in the history of the art, to unite the vitreous paste with its metallic base, endeavouring, as far as possible, to describe each genus in the language of some contemporary authority. The first, or Byzantine process, which obtained throughout the eastern empire from probably the time of Justinian down to about the year 1300, was illustrated from the particulars furnished by Theophilus, the celebrated artist-monk of the eleventh or twelfth century, and its chief peculiarity appeared to have been the formation of casements, or cavities, for the reception of the enamel, by means of gold filigree. The second, or early Limoges style, which was so much practised in that city from probably the eleventh century, until the frightful siege and massacre by the Black Prince, was described from a comparison of the admirable notices of Mr. Albert Way with those of M. Vetit, Dussieux, Vother, and the Abbe Texier, and would seem to have substituted for the filigree compartments of the Byzantine mode, excisions formed in the thick copper-plate by the graver. The third, or early Italian mode, practised for probably some fifty years before the days of Ugolino Veris, the artist who executed the celebrated shrine in Oevieto Cathedral in the year 1338, and carried by subsequent goldsmiths and enamellers down to the end of the sixteenth century, was detailed from descriptions given by Vasari and Benvenuto Cellini, about the middle of that century. It appears to have held a midway position between the ancient "champ leve," or incised, and the painted enamels afterwards produced, consisting in engraving silver after the manner of medallic relief, and then floating over it with variously coloured transparent pastes. As contemporary with this variety, mello was slightly alluded to.

Benvenuto was said to have, if not invented, at least been the first to describe the improvement that took place, about the beginning of the sixteenth century, in the art, which constituted what the reader called jeweller's enamel. It consisted in using as a vehicle with the glass powder employed to cover small gold or silver objects in the round "or in the highest relief," water in which pips of pears had been steeped. This held the paste in its place until vitrifaction took place, and was so delicate a cement, as to in no degree interfere with the perfect purity of the enamel.

The fifth, or "late Limoges" variety was described as having sprung at once, fully armed, from the brain of that Jupiter of enamel workers, Leonard Limousin, under the auspices of Francis I., and differed from its predecessors chiefly in entirely covering the surface of the metal with an opaque paste, and then painting on that with transparent colours, regaining the effect of a translucent ground by applying silver leaf in particular situations, fastening it with a glaze of colourless enamel, and then tinting over it. These peculiarities, as well as the *peinture grisâtre* and touching with gold, were illustrated from the interesting manuscripts published by M. Maurice Ardent, of Limoges. This style appears to have dwindled into nonentity under the hands of the Nonailhers, a family who lived (they can scarcely be said to have flourished) during the latter part of the seventeenth century. In connection with the detail of the sixth and last process, the miniature style, honourable allusion was made to the labours of Sir Theodore de Mayerne (whose interesting manuscript we may shortly hope to see published, under the auspices of Mr. Hendrie), and his connection with Petitot, the principal and best known of this school of art. The improvements effected in this style would seem to have been a great enrichment of the pallette by the addition of new pigments, the power of multiplying the number of firings, and gradually the succession of tints, their hardness and fusibility by the addition of fluxes, &c. Unhappily, the mystery many selfish artists have thrown over their modes of procedure render them exceedingly difficult to analyse or describe.

The reader then, commencing with Egypt, gave a rapid sketch of the history of the art, noting the barbaric enamels existent in the north, probably previous to the Roman conquests, touching on the connection between the Limoges and Byzantine schools, and tracing, though necessarily very briefly, all the salient points in its existence, as both a manufacture and an art, in our own and other countries. He glanced at what had been recently done in the ateliers of Wagner and Rudolph at Paris, and the paintings of Messrs. Bone and Essex, and concluded by expressing an earnest hope, that the knowledge of art possessed by those gentlemen might soon be grafted on the skill of our workmen, and that we may ere long adopt and fully carry out the old practice of the middle ages, so ably characterised by the Abbé Texier, in his eloquent declaration that then art and manufactures were blended and identified; art gaining by the affinity great practical facility, and manufactures much original beauty.

METROPOLITAN COMMISSION OF SEWERS.

A general court was held on Thursday morning in last week; the Right Hon. Lord Morpeth in the chair.

Several payments having been ordered, a recommendation was received from the General Purposes Committee—"That the committee have power to appoint Mr. Joseph Calverly as collecting clerk, with emoluments not exceeding 150*l.* a year, and on such conditions as the committee shall think expedient."

In reference to this recommendation it was stated that the cost of collection for the Westminster division for the future would not be more than one-fourth its former expense. The recommendation was agreed to.

The following recommendations for new sewers were also adopted:—Suffolk Mews, Middlesex Hospital, 300 feet of sewer, estimate 45*l.*; Uxbridge-road, Bayswater (conditionally), 330 feet of sewer, estimate, 85*l.*; Marylebone and Finchley-road (conditionally) 78 feet of sewer, estimate, 35*l.*; Ovington-square, Brompton (conditionally), proper outlets to be made, 75*l.*

It was stated that for the Uxbridge-road work the whole expense would be repaid by the parties benefitted; and in the case of the work at Ovington-square, Brompton, two parties would contribute each 25*l.*, so that the cost to the district would not exceed 25*l.*

A report was read from the Committee of General Purposes on the proposed drainage of the new Prison at Holloway, which stated that an estimate had been given in by Mr. Roe, the surveyor, of the expense of putting down an efficient drainage for the prison, and, at the same time, relieving the whole district of Holloway, which was at present frequently flooded. As the city of London were interested particularly in this matter, it was proposed that that corporation should contribute 975*l.*, and this court the remainder, the total cost being 1,700*l.*

In answer to a question of the Hon. F. Byng, the surveyors said, that the same works, under the old system of drainage, would have cost between 4,000*l.* and 5,000*l.* The report was agreed to.

The surveyor (Mr. Phillips) reported that John Hooper, of West Wall, Poplar, had broken into a sewer without leave of the court, and that he had been summoned to shew cause why he had done so. Upon being called he did not appear, and the summons being proved, he was fined 5*l.* for the damage, such fine not to be enforced until after the next court.

A report was read from the surveyors on the progress of the cleansing and flushing of sewers, which stated that 4,330 cubic yards of deposit had been flushed away from 33,999 feet in length of sewers in the Westminster division; and in the Tower Hamlets and Surrey and Kent divisions, 24,283 cubic yards had been flushed. The total length cleansed since the commencement of the present commission amounted to 86 miles. It also appeared that Mr. Hodgson, a practical chemist, had been called in to assist them (the surveyors) in the trial of experiments with the various deodorising fluids, so that it might be determined which kind would be the most efficacious and the cheapest; and with the view of aiding the court in their exertions for the benefit of the poor by all the means in his power, Sir William Burnett had offered to reduce the price of his deodorising fluid from 1s. 8d. to 7½d. per quart. Mr. Hodgson's report on the different fluids gave the following results:—The statement and correspondence were ordered to be printed for discussion hereafter.

	Cubic yds.	ft.		Quarts.		Per cubic yard. Pints.
Ledoyen's	33	18	required	197	equal to	11·93
Ellerman's	33	5	,,	96·50	,,	5·66
Burnett's	19	23	,,	11·75	,,	1·15

Mr. Stable said that, since the last court, upwards of 100 cesspools had been cleansed, and that, in every case, this had given the greatest satisfaction. The Hon. F. Byng wished to know whether their cleansing pump had been used by the corporation of London?—Mr. Roe said that one had been ordered by that body, and had since been seen in use in Paternoster-row.

The surveyors handed in certain estimates for the drainage of the East London Union Workhouse, in the Mile-end-road, from the surveyors to the city of London; and in answer to a question, the surveyor stated that a most efficient plan of drainage might be executed at two-thirds less expense than the present plan. Mr. Leslie thought that an amended plan should be prepared by their surveyors, and he had no doubt whatever that the city of London would be quite ready to adopt it.

Lord Morpeth said this court could not interfere with their jurisdiction. They must take care not to "poach" upon their manor. Mr. Leslie differed with the noble lord, as the locality was under their jurisdiction and control. Mr. Lambert Jones was of opinion that there was a misunderstanding on this subject. If their surveyors could offer any better plan than the one proposed, he was quite sure that the city of London would be but too happy to adopt it. The surveyor said the city plan would give a drainage four times larger than would ever be required; and a resolution was then carried that an amended plan be drawn up by their surveyors, and laid before the next court.

Miscellanea.

The Parthenon.—Notwithstanding that literature is at a stand-still in Paris, the correspondent of the *Literary Gazette* announces the approaching publication of a great work, *in folio*, the price of which will not be less than 400*f.*, entitled *Le Parthenon*; the authors are MM. de Laborde, member of the Institute, and A. Paccart, architect. It will form two volumes, divided into twenty parts. "You are aware," he says, "that the excavations, ordered by the present King of Greece to be made in the Acropolis, were concluded in 1844. The object of M. Laborde is, above all, to bring into notice the numerous relics found in these excavations, which may conduce to the restoration of the Parthenon, viz., to the perfect appreciation of *the* model *par excellence*."

Death through want of Drainage.—An inquest was held last week on the body of George Sanders, who died in Gloucester-street, Hackney-road. The surgeon attributed it to the foul air of a cesspool outside the house, which had not been emptied for nine years, and shewed that the drainage of the district was very bad. Verdict—"That the deceased died from the effects of noxious vapours, and the insufficient drainage of the neighbourhood."

Salisbury Cathedral Spire.—It is intended to have the spire of Salisbury cathedral church newly pointed in the course of the ensuing summer. We are told that a period of 19 years has elapsed since any similar repairs were made.

In the Rough Plate Glass Manufacture an improvement or simplification has been patented by Mr. James Hartley, of Sunderland, viz.—the transfer of the molten "metal" by ladling directly from the melting-pot to the table, without the use of a cistern or a second heating. The plates so made are then annealed by piling, as for crown and sheet glass, and not with the usual costly furnaces.

Griffith's "Ancient Gothic Churches."—Mr. Griffith has issued the second part of his work on the proportions of ancient churches. We shall take an early opportunity to review it.

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